

## **Socio-Economic Determinants of Fertility in some Countries of Asia**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Most of the developing countries in Asia have experienced declines in their fertility levels over the last two decades. While some small countries (Islands) of Asia viz., Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and also Sri Lanka started showing symptoms of fertility decline in the early fifties, most of the bigger countries in Asia which were comparatively less developed experienced declines in their fertility only after the introduction of their national family planning programmes. However, the declines in birth rates of these countries remained uneven depending on the levels of their socio-economic development at the time of the implementation of the programme and subsequently. Again, in some countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Iran, and Pakistan fertility circa 1975 remained quite high inspite of introduction of family planning programmes because of low levels of their socio-economic development and high level of their infant mortality rates. It is thus clear that while improving of the socio-economic conditions of the people created demand for the smaller families in some of these developing countries, the introduction of the national family planning programme created awareness among the people, by and large, about the need of small family and also helped in strengthening the supply of effective contraceptives to the eligible couples to avoid the unwanted pregnancies. The effects of socio-economic factors and the family planning programme on fertility reductions in these countries are quite confounded and it is not so easy to segregate their effects on fertility keeping in view the non-experimental nature of the data available for any such analysis.

Mauldin and Berelson (1978) and Srinivasan (1979) present a good review of the macro studies on fertility which have attempted to analyse the determinants of fertility levels. While majority of the studies purported to study the causes of fertility declines, sought directly to measure the impact of socio-economic factors on fertility, a very few of these studies such as those of Srikantan (1977), Mauldin and Berelson (1978) attempt to include family planning performance along with the socio-economic variables,